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AUTHOR Kelly, James D.
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ABSTRACT

To provide a better understanding of the depictions of countries by the news media, it is necessary to determine whether similar portraits are presented in all types of reporting or whether there are different, or even contradictory, portrayals of foreign countries within individual newspapers considered nationally influential. A study examined the images presented of the governments of El Salvador and Nicaragua in four U.S. elite newspapers during 1983, primarily focusing on the frequency and direction of mention. Content analysis was used in an attempt to discern whether an overall image of a foreign country is a reasonable manifestation of how that country is presented in mass media, or whether such an overall measure is too broad. Results indicated considerable differences between the images presented by domestic and foreign reporters, probably due to the differences in the informational sources they consult and quote in their reports rather than any overt bias. In addition, findings suggest that there is a relationship between the policy position of the U.S. Government toward the governments of El Salvador and Nicaragua and the type of coverage those two governments receive in the elite press of the United States. (Five tables and 44 notes are appended.) (MS)

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El Salvador and Nicaragua In Four Elite U.S. Newspapers: Multiple Images and the Journalist's Reporting Perspective

by
James D. Kelly
Doctoral Student
Ernie Pyle Hall 212
Indiana University
Bloomington, IN 47405
(812) 335-9240

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El Salvador and Nicaragua In Four Elite U.S. Newspapers: Multiple Images and the Journalist's Reporting Perspective

Concern about how countries are depicted in the media has been evident for some time, and the issue has received considerable attention from mass communication scholars.[1] These depictions, or images, play an important role in the audience's knowledge and understanding of the world. This study hopes to provide a better understanding of these images by determining whether similar portraits are presented in all types of reporting. Basically, it attempts to determine whether there are different, or even contradictory portrayals of foreign countries within individual newspapers considered nationally influential. By analyzing how reporters and editors in different organizational positions and geographic locations contribute to the image formation process, we should be better able to determine whether newspapers present a consistent image of foreign countries, or whether the image varies according to the informational sources employed by the writers.

Image is a difficult concept to define when considered in the broadest sense. Boulding was concerned with "images of nations" and suggested that it was the image of countries that was real and that the "real" was just an image.[2] Scott described the social and psychological correlates of image as representing the totality of attributes a person recognized or imagined for a country.[3] Both scholars viewed images as subject to change. They discussed images in terms of the entirety of nations, including the cultural, economic, social and political aspects.

This study considers only two countries and examines only the image of those countries' governments, rather than the national character as a whole.

In a democracy, the government's foreign policy is, in part, influenced by the opinions held by certain attentive publics and some individual members of society. And many of the impressions individuals have of foreign countries are undoubtedly based on what they read, view and hear in the mass media.[4] The farther away an event or issue occurs from an individual, both in geographic distance and cultural distance, the more he or she must rely on other sources, such as the mass media, for information about the event.

The images of foreign governments presented in the media are therefore of particular concern in the United States since, theoretically, it is ultimately the people who determine foreign policy by way of choosing their representatives, and the people rely on the mass media for much of their information.

The mass media do not speak with a single voice, of course. In the United States there are not only a wide variety of sources — newspapers, magazines, radio, television, etc. — but each medium is actually a collection of the work of many individuals. The image of a country conveyed in a particular newspaper, for example, is built by a number of different reporters, photographers and editors, and is necessarily a rather complex creation. The overall impression of a foreign country formed by the total content over time could be considered the image of that country formed by the newspaper, but it seems important to remember that such an image is the result of an amalgamation of messages, with each different source contributing a different perspective.

This situation presents several interesting questions. Do the images of foreign countries created by the various individuals who report and shape the news content vary, and if so, how do they vary? Which individuals or groups of individuals have the greatest impact on the overall images presented by the newspaper? What impact might the U.S. government have on the images of foreign countries presented to the public by the mass media?

The answers to these questions are important because the mass media news organizations present themselves to the public as objective reporters of the news. They maintain that the news they report is devoid of bias and opinions, and is instead the product of a process that gives the readers facts rather than opinions, information rather than propaganda. The news media report on the actions of the government, but are careful to attribute all statements to individual sources. The opinions of the reporter are not to influence the reporting of fact. He or she is instead to act as an objective channel of information to the reader from sources beyond the everyday reach of the reader.

Should differences be found in the images conveyed by different groups of reporters within the same news medium, such a finding would raise questions as to whether the "overall" image that previous studies have examined is really a fine enough measurement of a foreign county's image. It might well be that "overall" image is a gross simplification that fails to detect the full complexity of image formation in the mass media. The question is not really whether the mass media are biased in their presenta tion, but rather whether the sources consulted by writers have an impact on the type of image formed.[5]

If geographical distance to an event has an effect on the information sources available to the citizen reader, it seems likely that proximity to events and issues in foreign countries may also play a role in the type of image that is formed by the reporter of the news.[6] This study will examine news reports and editorials produced by journalists who write from different perspectives on the same topic. The three groupings of journalists are: 1) the foreign correspondents, 2) the reporters covering the national government in Washington, D.C. and 3) the editorial writers.

Each group consults different types of human informational sources. The reporters rely on governmental officials of the country they report from and the editorial writers depend on staff reporters themselves. Documentary sources of information are similarly different in type.

If the image of a foreign country's government is based on the objective reality of how that government behaves in the world community and towards its citizens, it would seem that there would be some general agreement among the images constructed by the three groups of reporters and editors outlined above. If there are substantial differences in the images, the question of why these images differ takes on considerable importance. Perhaps the informational sources consulted by one group of journalists but not by the others, plays a significant or even biasing role in the construction of the images of foreign country's governments.

In order to address this question of differing images we must examine the content of the mass media, determine the nature of the images of foreign governments constructed by each of the three groups, and compare these images to determine the extent to which they agree. In order to keep the study feasible, it focuses on the coverage of two countries' governments, El Salvador's and Nicaragua's, in four major metropolitan

newspapers, The New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, The Washington Post, and the Chicago Tribune. The principal concern is how the governments' are portrayed in the media, whether the images vary between the journalistic groups and, if so, in what manner they vary.

Background on the Subject Countries

El Salvador and Nicaragua are Central American countries sharing similar histories, religion and other cultural attributes.[7] Economically, both are considered a part of the Third World or perhaps more precisely, the Less Developed Countries, reporting Gross National Products per capita of less than $1000.[8] Their economies are primarily based on the production of raw materials for foreign markets and thus dependent on the industrialized nations for many of their manufactured product needs.[9]

Perhaps the major difference between the two countries today, however, is the current political state of affairs. El Salvador is struggling through a civil war that has continued at least since the late 1970s, while Nicaragua has been trying to create legitimate governmental forms in the wake of a revolution in 1979 that overthrew a government that had ruled the country since WWII.[10] The U.S. government views the two countries differently. It supports the government of El Salvador both politically and economically, but has withdrawn all economic assistance to Nicaragua since 1981, and has argued that the government there is politically illegitimate and hostile to the people of Nicaragua.[11]

Because of the historic, economic and cultural similarities of the two countries, one would expect that any misinterpretations or misunderstandings resulting from cultural differences between subject and writer would be similar for both countries. One would also expect to find that

U.S. government spokesmen would present images of the two countries that differ dramatically. For these reasons, they make for a rather unique comparative pair.

Purpose of the Study

Mass communication researchers have held that frequency analysis is useful and appropriate for measuring the importance or intensity of a subject portrayed in the mass media.[12] This study examines the images presented of the governments of El Salvador and Nicaragua in four U.S. elite newspapers during 1983, primarily focusing on the frequency and direction of mention.[13] By assigning a direction, either favorable or unfavorable, to each mention of either government, an indication of how the two countries' governments are portrayed can be made by comparing the relative frequencies of such directional statements.

This study is an attempt to discern whether an overall image of a foreign country is a reasonable manifestation of how that country is presented in the mass media, or whether such an overall measure is too broad, concealing the diversity of images that are presented in the media rather than revealing the images latent in the content.

It attempts to determine whether or not the images of the governments of El Salvador and Nicaragua, as conveyed by the four newspapers, is consistent between coverage by Central American reporters, Washington reporters and editorial writers. Additionally, the study will look to see whether there is agreement between the government's policy positions toward the two countries and the nature of the images (favorable or unfavorable) conveyed in the newspaper coverage. While images of foreign countries have previously been studied quite extensively and correlations

between government stance and countries' images in the media have been discovered, the research thus far has not broken down the coverage of foreign governments by these types of coverage.

Previous Research

A review of the literature suggests Third World countries are far more likely to receive coverage in the U.S. media when they are the scene of extraordinary events than when they are not. Research by the International Press Institute[14] and by Hart[15] suggested news does not flow evenly between regions of the world nor do newspapers in different regions publish foreign news in the same proportions. Gerbner and Marvanyi indicated that individual regions present various views of the world to their readers according to such factors as geographical proximity, East-West bloc relationships, established communication channels and political alignments.[16] Not all countries see the world from the same perspective.

Galtung and Ruge's[17] landmark study on international news flow, later expanded by Sande,[18] found that much of foreign news is crisis oriented. This crisis orientation is especially evident in coverage of developing countries in the newspapers of the Western developed world. The significance of crisis in news selection was recently explored again by Sreberny-Mohammadi, whose research confirmed a strong emphasis on crisis reporting of the developing regions.[19] Most of the news in the world's press concerned diplomatic and political occurrences in the developed world. Major crises were covered wherever they happened, but this type of reporting constituted a far greater percentage of the news about developing countries than of the developed world. These studies suggest

that the image of Third World nations tend to be associated with crisis and are therefore incomplete.

There is some evidence that the political position of the U.S. government is somewhat correlated with newspaper editorials about foreign countries. A 1964 study by Lynch and Effendi on the editorial coverage of India showed that The New York Times' editorial treatment of India became more favorable at approximately the same time that the relationship between the U.S. government and the government of India improved.[20]

Additional evidence of this type of relationship is provided by Sahin's 1973 examination of news items about Turkey in The New York Times.[21] Using an evaluative assertion technique, he also concluded that the newspaper's coverage became more favorable toward Turkey as the political relationship between the United States and Turkey improved. These studies and others suggest that the images of foreign countries are somehow related to U.S. government policy concerns.[22]

Several studies have examined the relationship between news correspondents, both domestic and foreign, and the informational sources they consult. Most have been detailed investigations into the nature of the relationship, but all agree that correspondent's primary sources are governmental officials themselves rather than documents or experts outside the government. These officials, whether elected or staff, are the most important sources of information on the government's activities and positions and are the most highly cultivated.[23]

Editorial writers are less likely to come in routine contact with government officials than are correspondents. Their principal sources are the reporters themselves and their reports. Surveys of newspaper editorial writers over the last 25 years have consistently shown that a

newspaper's clip library is an editorial writer's principal document source and that a paper's reporters are the principal human sources.[24]

Overall then, a reporter's primary source of information about a government is the government official while an editorial writer's primary source is the reporter. It seems reasonable therefore, that the informational sources employed by a journalist also contribute to the image presented of a particular country.

Many previous studies have examined foreign countries' images and provide valuable insights. Merrill's research on the image of the United States in Mexican newspapers found several basic characterizations of Northern Americans, and that both staff writers and international news agencies contributed to such an image.[25] He suggested that the overall characterization was basically negative or unfavorable. Merrill made no attempt to discern any possible difference in the image conveyed by the news agencies' reports and the staff reports and editorials, and he made little distinction between images of the "American people" and of the government of the United States.

Willis argues that images held of a country's people and their government can differ dramatically.[26] Using a written questionnaire administered to a sample of university students, he concluded that, not only do people's image of foreign governments change over time, but that they often hold negative views of the governments at the same time they hold very positive images of the people who are governed.[27]

Belkaoui examined the images of Arabs and Israelis over a period of eight years around the 1973 war, and found subtle changes over time.[28] Using a content analysis method that counted verbs synonymous with the words "said," "tell" and "ask," and judgmental adjectives used in the

reports of a number of elite U.S. news publications, she then assigned degrees of favorableness or unfavorableness to them to construct a measure of image. She also examined public opinion polling on Middle East issues during the same time. She tentatively concluded that elite publications play a major role in the creation and manipulation of international images, though she made no distinction between images of governments and people.

Lee also used content analysis to determine how the image of Japan in the North American press has changed over time.[29] He focused his research specifically on the image of the people of Japan, though he did take governmental image into account somewhat. While Lee made mention of coding news stories as either favorable, unfavorable or neutral, no specific mention is made of the coefficient of imbalance or of the results of such coding.

Pratt content analyzed six U.S. news and opinion magazines to discern the images portrayed of Africa.[30] Rather than viewing the press as a single entity, he made a comparative study of how the images the magazines created differed. Though the article quotes from the texts frequently concerning individual countries, there is no apparent attempt to assess each country's image but rather, Africa is treated as a whole. While it is interesting to note the differences between the magazines, the impreciseness of the image being studied causes considerable concern as to validity.

Perhaps the most interesting image study for the purposes of this research is one conducted by Dajani and Donohue.[31] Their content analysis of the Arab press used a coefficient of imbalance to measure the images of foreign countries. Comparisons are made between the six newspapers

analyzed and between the various countries appearing in the newspaper coverage, particularly Israel, France, Great Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States. The study suggests several possible variables that might have influenced the images presented, as well as some ideas as to why the six papers, each from a different Arab country, varied in the images portrayed.

None of the research reviewed has considered the possibility that newspaper may be presenting more than one image of a particular foreign entity, whether a government, a people or some other grouping. While there is certainly something to be learned from studying the overall image a mass medium presents to the readership, such a broad measure of image may be concealing interesting differences within the newspaper.

This study examines this multiple image notion. News, unlike literature or other writing forms, is not the expression of the authors' thoughts so much as it is the reporting of others' opinions and actions. It seems plausible then, that if the types of informational sources consulted by reporters differ, the image of a particular subject country would necessarily reflect the attitudes of the sources.

The object then, is to be in a position to determine whether more than one image of a foreign government is presented in a newspaper and whether the image of El Salvador differs from the image of Nicaragua.

To make such determinations the following hypotheses are tested:

1. The overall image of the government of El Salvador in elite newspapers of the U.S. will be portrayed more favorably than will the overall image of the government of Nicaragua.

2. The degree to which the newspaper images are favorable or unfavorable will vary between news reports from Central America, domestic news reports and the newspaper editorials.

3. The editorial opinion of the newspapers will conform more closely to the images of these governments formed in the domestic reports than the foreign reports.

Should these hypotheses be supported by an analysis of the content, a modification of our previous considerations of image formation in the mass media would seem needed to account for the differences attributable to the type of reports contained in the overall message.

Method

Content analysis was used to determine the nature of the images portrayed of the governments of El Salvador and Nicaragua by four elite U.S. newspapers. The nature of those images was measured using a coefficient of imbalance. Comparisons were made between the two countries' overall images, the images of those countries conveyed by the three types of coverage — unsigned editorials, domestic news reports and news reports from Central America — and between the three types themselves.

A constructed three-week period was selected randomly from the year 1983[32] and yielded 111 news reports from the four papers, roughly half from Central America and half from Washington, D.C. The constructed week method of sampling was shown to be quite reliable by Jones and Carter.[33] All unsigned editorials mentioning either El Salvador or Nicaragua printed during 1983 were coded using the same technique used for the news reports. There were 99 unsigned editorials in the four newspapers in 1983.

Though photographs and graphics may contribute to the image of a foreign government projected in a newspaper, the coding of photographs as favorable or unfavorable is far more difficult to reliably measure than text and so were not considered.

News reports were coded if they were listed under any subject-heading directly associated with El Salvador or Nicaragua in the four newspapers' yearly indices.[34] Reports labeled "news analysis" were considered as news reports. While such reports are typically not event centered, they do fall into the objective news reporting area, and therefore must be considered part of the image that the news reporter presents. Letters to the editor, guest columns and signed editorials were excluded from the analysis because, though the editors of the newspapers do decide which letters and columns are printed, they do not necessarily represent the opinion of the newspaper.

The four newspapers — The New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, The Washington Post and the Chicago Tribune — were selected because of their large circulations, their geographical separation and their perceived influence on public opinion. Each of these newspapers had a staff correspondent in at least one of the two countries of focus. All had at least one domestic correspondent in Washington, D.C., and had access to the major wire services. Collectively they represent the elite press in the United States and individually, each carries considerable weight within its home city, if not throughout the country.[35] Some large, quality newspapers are noticeably absent from this sample. They have been omitted so as not to overly represent the Eastern portion of the country.

The Coefficient of Imbalance

The Coefficient of Imbalance is a "general formula which may be applied to classified content data in order to present an overall estimate of the degree of ... the extent to which favorable, neutral or unfavorable treatment is accorded to the topic ... under analysis." as described by

Fadner and Janis.[36] They further state that the method "is intended to be applicable to all types of communications — including mass communications."[37]

This was the primary measure employed in the coding and was the basis for determining the various images — those conveyed by the four newspapers as a whole, those conveyed by the three coverage types and those conveyed by the individual newspapers. Additional measures were made that provide relevant information about the prominence of display a report is given in the newspaper, the specific provider of the report (ie. AP, UPI, staff, etc.) and the volume of material printed as measured in paragraphs.

The relevant content references were coded according to the content analytic methods specified in the coefficient of imbalance. The unit of analysis was the sentence.

Relevant sentences were those referring to specific attitude objects. The attitude objects were the government or government official(s), the administration or administrator(s), the legislature or legislator(s) of, the judiciary or judge(s), the military or military official(s), the national police or police officer(s) and any referent that is directly related to the government of either El Salvador or Nicaragua. Additionally, any sentence referring directly to the armed opposition, rebels, guerrillas or their official representatives was coded as referring indirectly, but in the opposite direction, to the government. The basic reasoning for this rests on the notion that a positive reference to the enemy reflects negatively on government.[38] All other sentences were coded as irrelevant.

The content unit was the individual news report or editorial. The total content was the number of sentences in the coded article.

A sentence was coded as favorable in these cases:[39]

1) when the statement placed the government in an advantageous position as to victory in the war,

2) when the statement placed the government in an advantageous position as to the country's international prestige,

3) when the statement placed the government in an advantageous position as to a group of citizens within the country,

4) when the statement associated the government or governmental official with a socially approved objective or value,

5) when the statement attributed a positive evaluation or personal virtue to the government or to governmental official(s),

6) when the statement presented the government's or government official's position on an issue in conjunction with a favorable evaluation of the issue.

All sentences containing statements contrary to the above list of favorable statements were coded unfavorable. Additionally, all sentences that placed the armed opposition forces in advantageous positions were coded unfavorable (to the government). For example, the following sentence would have been coded as unfavorable to the government: "The rebels are winning the respect of the rural people."

A sentence was coded as neutral when the sentence was neither favorable nor unfavorable, or when, in the presence of two competing statements (one favorable and the other unfavorable), one favorable statement compensates for one unfavorable statement. For example, the following sentence would be coded as neutral: "The government forces are beating back the rebels in province A but are suffering losses in province B."

Assignment of sentences into the categories was subjected to a reliability test.

The coefficient of imbalance is computed by applying the formulae:

$Cf = \frac{f - u}{r} * \frac{f}{t}$ where f u or $Cu = \frac{f - u}{r} * \frac{u}{t}$ where f u,

or more simply stated,

$Cf = \frac{f^2 - fu}{rt}$ where f u or $Cu = \frac{fu - u^2}{rt}$ where f u,

where t=total number of units, r=number of relevant units, f=number of favorable units and u=number of unfavorable units.[40]

It seemed entirely reasonable, given the nature of news reporting and editorial writing, that the ratio between relevant sentences and total sentences would be very different for news reports and editorials. It was therefore necessary to make initial comparisons of the images conveyed by the three types of coverage using only the component to the left of the multiplication sign in the first two formulae. This component is termed the "weighted average presentations of relevant content" by Fadner and Janis, and is limited in its interpretation.[41]

All coding was done by the author. A reliability test was conducted on five percent of the sample which yielded an observed agreement of 95 percent for the referent variable and 91 percent for the direction variable.[42]

Findings

The full sample of the four newspapers yielded 210 coded articles or cases. The New York Times provided the largest number of cases, 92 (43.8 percent of total); followed in order by the Los Angeles Times, 55 (26.2 percent); The Washington Post, 34 (16.2 percent); and the Chicago Tribune, 29 (13.8 percent).

Of the three major types of coverage, the largest in number was the editorials, 99 (47.1 percent); followed by the Central American reports, 66 (31.4 percent); and the domestic reports, 45 (21.4 percent). Thus, the sample yielded considerably more editorials than either foreign or domestic news reports. The relatively large number of editorials is probably not needed to make comparisons with the other two types of coverage, but is not problematic since the 99 editorials represent a census of the year and therefore can properly be compared with a representative sample.

A rather large percentage of the news reports (excluding editorials) were printed on the front page of the newspapers, a sign of high prominence. Of the 111 news reports, 26 (23.5 percent) appeared on page one. Nicaragua was slightly more likely to appear on the front page than El Salvador. Five of the 17 reports with Nicaraguan datelines (29.4 percent) and nine of the 36 reports (25 percent) from El Salvador were on page one. This difference, however, does not seem great enough to suggest that one country was given significantly more prominent display than the other.

Only 27 (12.9 percent) of the news reports had a dateline other than El Salvador, Nicaragua or Washington D.C. Fourteen (6.7 percent) of these were filed from either the United Nations in New York or from California, where the U.S. president was vacationing. Of the 13 (6.2 percent) foreign reports filed from outside El Salvador or Nicaragua, all were filed from a Central American country. Hence, while it would not be totally accurate to state that the the three types of coverage are distributed by datelines of El Salvador and Nicaragua, Washington, D.C. and editorial page, that is largely the case.

News coverage (again excluding editorials) of El Salvador was considerably greater than that of Nicaragua in both number of articles and number of total paragraphs. There were 36 articles (671 paragraphs) datelined El Salvador, 24 articles (338 paragraphs) with U.S. datelines and an additional 3 articles (35 paragraphs) mainly about El Salvador datelined elsewhere. There were 17 articles (288 paragraphs) datelined Nicaragua, 21 articles (225 paragraphs) with U.S. datelines and an additional 10 articles (163 paragraphs) mainly about Nicaragua datelined elsewhere, primarily from Honduras. Thus, while the total coverage of El Salvador consisted of 63 articles totaling 1144 paragraphs, the total coverage of Nicaragua was only 48 articles totaling 676 paragraphs. (see Table 1 a.)

Editorial coverage of the two countries was much more even, however. El Salvador was the main subject of 48 editorials (343 paragraphs) and Nicaragua was the main subject of 51 editorials (410 paragraphs). (see Table 1 b.)

Table 1 about here

It must be noted that these breakdowns for news and editorial coverage are separated by the country that was the main focus, not the sole focus. In many of the news reports and the editorials, both countries were mentioned. This is especially true of coverage originating in the United States, both editorials and domestic news reports. For this reason, the use of the sentence, as opposed to the article, as the unit of analysis is a much better indicator of coverage frequency, and the Factor A figures are therefore more accurate measures. Before discussing the Factor A coefficients, however, it is informative to further break down the article

and paragraph measures to get a better overall description of the coverage.

The newspapers printed both material supplied exclusively to their newspaper and material available to almost all newspapers. Specifically, the news reports can be divided between staff-produced material and non-staff-produced material, which was almost exclusively wire service copy.[43] Since staff-produced copy is relatively more expensive than wire-supplied material, a high percentage of staff-produced copy might indicate a type of prominence. When the coded news reports were broken down in this way, however, there was little difference either between El Salvador and Nicaragua or between Central American and U.S. datelines. This was the case whether measured in number of reports or in number of paragraphs contained in the reports.

There were approximately three staff reports for every two non-staff reports, both for El Salvador and Nicaragua and for foreign and domestic datelines. (see Table 2 a.) The staff reports tended on average to be longer than the non-staff reports, and so the number of paragraphs is perhaps a better measure in this case. Again, however, there is little difference between either the countries or the datelines. Staff-produced material accounted for about three-fourths of the total for all stories written about El Salvador or Nicaragua, whether written in the United States or in Central America. This seems to indicate that, though the editors did provide more total coverage on El Salvador than Nicaragua, the provided coverage was similar regarding the allocation of newspaper resources in the form of both domestic and foreign correspondents. (see Table 2 b.)

Table 2 about here

To assess the overall (three types of reports combined) images of the two countries in the four newspapers, Factor A coefficients were calculated using all 210 news reports and editorials. The coding yielded 1385 relevant sentences, of which 757 concerned the government of El Salvador and 628 concerned Nicaragua's government. The sentences relevant to El Salvador were split with approximately three favorable to four unfavorable mentions: a coefficient of -.1255. El Salvador's government's overall image then was slightly unfavorable. The 628 sentences relevant to Nicaragua were distributed quite differently, splitting at approximately one favorable to three unfavorable mentions: a coefficient of -.4666. Thus, though both countries' governments were portrayed unfavorably, Nicaragua was portrayed less favorably than El Salvador by a factor of .3411. (see Table 3.)

Table 3 about here

This primary finding strongly supports the first hypothesis, that the overall image of the government of El Salvador in the elite press would be portrayed more favorably than would the government of Nicaragua. One might well be tempted to suggest that this finding is due to a correlation between the U.S. government's foreign policies toward the two countries and press coverage, and that perhaps the elite press is swayed by those policies into favoring one over the other. Such a conclusion, however, would be far too imprecise, as the following findings will make clear.

Rather than relying on gross, overall images, it is informative to note how the comparison looks when a more detailed breakdown of that image is made. The second comparison was again made between the images of the two counties, but this time the overall image was divided into the three types of coverage: Central American reports, domestic reports and

editorials. Again the total number of reports was 210 and these yielded the same 1385 relevant sentences, but the Factor A coefficients for each country differ between the coverage types.

Of the total number of relevant sentences, 561 were produced by the foreign correspondents. The coding of the reports from Central America resulted in approximately seven favorable to nine unfavorable mentions of El Salvador, a coefficient of -.1137, and approximately one favorable to three unfavorable mentions of Nicaragua, a coefficient of -.4128. As in the overall image, both governments were portrayed unfavorably, and Nicaragua was again less favorable than El Salvador, but the difference between the Central American reports by themselves was only a factor of .2991. (see Table 4 a.)

The domestic reports, primarily filed from Washington, D.C., produced 264 relevant sentences. The mentions of El Salvador were almost evenly divided between favorable and unfavorable, a coefficient of -.0224, while Nicaragua's mentions were split approximately two favorable to three unfavorable, a coefficient of -.4538. Nicaragua is portrayed more unfavorably than El Salvador, but the difference, a factor of .4314, is much greater in the domestic reports as a group than in either the overall or in the Central American reports only. (see Table 4 b.)

The third type of coverage, consisting only of the unsigned editorials, produced 560 relevant sentences. El Salvador's mentions were approximately five favorable to eight unfavorable, a coefficient of -.1893, and Nicaragua's mentions were approximately one favorable to four unfavorable, a coefficient of -.5143. Again, Nicaragua was portrayed less favorably than El Salvador; however, the difference, a factor of .3250, is

neither as great as in the domestic reports nor as small as in the foreign reports. (see Table 4 c.)

Table 4 about here

Though the division of the overall image does not change the overall trend of El Salvador being portrayed less unfavorably than Nicaragua, it does suggest that there are differences between the images presented in the three types of coverage. The second hypothesis, that the degree to which the newspaper images are favorable or unfavorable will vary between news reports from Central America, domestic news reports and the newspaper editorials, seems to be supported by these findings.

Support for the third hypothesis, that the editorial opinion of the newspapers will conform more closely to the images of the governments formed in the domestic reports than the foreign reports, is not supported. The midpoint between the coefficients for foreign and domestic news coverage is .3652. To even partially support the third hypothesis, the editorial coefficient would have to be greater than the midpoint. However, the coefficient for editorials was .3250, considerably below the midpoint. It appears that the images of the two countries formed on the editorial page more closely conform to those presented in the foreign reports than the domestic reports, the opposite direction of the hypothesis.

The full Coefficient of Imbalance was calculated for each of the three types of coverage and for the overall image. It produced a rather unexpected finding related to, but not specified in the hypotheses. In both the overall image and in each of the three types, the full coefficient indicates that though both governments were characterized negatively, Nicaragua was mentioned in a larger percentage of the total

number of sentences than was El Salvador. In other words, when the topic was Nicaragua, much more of the article was about the government than when the topic was El Salvador. [44]

It is also interesting to note that the difference between the two countries is much greater in the overall figure than in any of the individual groups. The overall coefficients for the two governments differ by .0777, Nicaragua receiving far more saturated negative coverage than El Salvador. The differences between coefficients for each of the groups, however, is .0196 for foreign, .0476 for domestic and .0269 for editorial. As was evident in the Factor A coefficient alone, the overall figures seem to be rather vague when compared with the figures for the three groups. (see Table 5.)

Table 5 about here

The full coefficients again show that the domestic reports provide the greatest share of the difference between the images of the two countries, and that the overall figures conceal important information that provides a better understanding of the image of foreign countries' governments in the U.S. elite press.

Discussion

The purpose of the study was in a sense two-fold. First, it was designed to determine whether the overall image of a foreign country is a complete and full indication of the image of a country portrayed in a news paper. Second, it was to contribute additional evidence and partial explanation of the previously observed correlation between the U.S. government's foreign policy toward a foreign country and the favorability of the coverage such a country receives in the elite press. The findings

of this study indicate that while there is a positive correlation between government policy and newspaper coverage, all types of reporting do not necessarily contribute to such a relationship in the same manner.

The basic finding that Nicaragua was portrayed more unfavorably than El Salvador is exactly what one would expect to find according to previous research. The U.S. government is opposed to the government of Nicaragua and favorable to that of El Salvador. The overall images observed in the four newspapers studied are in basic agreement with the U.S. government's policy. Such a finding suggests that the press is somehow biased against governments that are out of favor with the U.S. government and that such negative images are manifestations of such bias. This study cannot refute such conclusions — that was never its intention. But it can suggest that such a conclusion is ill advised not only because of the nature of correlations, but specifically because an overall image fails to distinguish between the various images presented of the same country by different types of reporting.

When the overall image is broken down into the domestic, foreign and editorial groups, it is clear that each type of coverage contributes a somewhat different image of the subject country. Observation of two counties has permitted us to judge the image of one country as it contrasts to the image of the other. Thus, the overall images of Nicaragua and El Salvador, while both negative, differ from each other by a considerable margin which can be quantified by the Factor A coefficient of the coefficient of imbalance. This figure serves as a benchmark from which we can view the differences in the images created by the groups.

The basic finding remains the same across the three groups — Nicaragua is portrayed more unfavorably than is El Salvador — but the degree to

which this is true differs according to the type of reporting. Stories by foreign correspondents reveal less difference between the two countries than was the case in the overall figures, while stories by domestic reporters reveal a much greater difference between the two governments. The editorials reveal nearly the same degree of difference as the overall.

Though there is little difference between the two images as portrayed in the editorials and as represented in the overall figure, there is considerable difference between the images presented by the two groups of news reporters. The reporters in the United States portrayed Nicaragua far more unfavorably than El Salvador. The divergence from the overall figure was due primarily to a nearly neutral portrayal of El Salvador. The reporters in Central America portrayed the two countries more equally unfavorable. The figures for the Central American reports diverge from those of the overall because they presented both countries less unfavorably than the overall figure.

These findings might be viewed as further evidence of news bias in line with the government's position. Perhaps the domestic reporters are more likely swayed by government arguments and, because of the symbiotic relationship they develop with their sources, they slant the news. Following this argument, the foreign reporters are less influenced and thereby slant their reporting less. Perhaps there is merit to such an argument. This study cannot prove otherwise. There is, however, an alternative explanation that is perhaps a bit more subtle.

The differences observed between domestic and foreign reporters is more likely due to the differences in the informational sources they consult and quote in their reports than it is to any overt bias. A reporter based in Washington, D.C. is most likely to be quoting U.S.

government sources while a Central American correspondent is more likely to quote the foreign government's officials. A U.S. government official will portray Nicaragua in a negative light and El Salvador in a positive vein. Likewise, a foreign government official will tend to portray his own government in the most favorable manner possible. It seems entirely reasonable then that a reporter who consults mainly U.S. government sources would present an image more in line with the government's policy stand than would a reporter who more often quotes officials of the foreign governments.

This source influence argument seems far more convincing than the bias argument, but it cannot fully account for the one unexpected finding of the study which was derived from the full coefficient of imbalance; according to the overall figures, reports about Nicaragua are much more heavily saturated with statements about the government than is the case with reports about El Salvador. In other words, if the topic is Nicaragua, the report is far more likely to be about the government than if the topic is El Salvador.

This relationship is also observed when the three groups are examined. In this breakdown, each group shows a greater saturation of negative statements about the government of Nicaragua than about that of El Salvador. This is especially true for the domestic reports which were twice as unfavorable to Nicaragua as were the foreign reports.

In conclusion then, this study has found that there is a relationship between the policy position of the U.S. government toward the governments of El Salvador and Nicaragua and the type of coverage those two governments receive in the elite press of the United States. Although both countries' governments are portrayed unfavorably, Nicaragua's is portrayed

more unfavorably than is El Salvador's. This relationship holds true whether only the overall images of the countries are examined or whether those images are broken down according to type of coverage. There is, however, a considerable difference in the images of the two governments created by the three types of coverage. Foreign correspondents presented the least difference between the two countries while domestic reporters presented the most.

Although reporter bias cannot be ruled out, it seems likely that at least some of the image differences between the two governments is due to the types of sources consulted and quoted by the various journalists. But this study does not explain the findings completely. The full coefficient of imbalance figures indicate that the subject nature of coverage of Nicaragua is far more restricted to governmental actions than is the case with El Salvador.

Whether the difference in what is reported about in El Salvador and Nicaragua is because of a difference in what is written by the reporters, or a difference in the criteria used by editors in determining what to print in the paper, or some other reason, cannot be determined at this point. What has been demonstrated is that the overall image previously examined is somewhat incomplete because it does not reveal differences in images presented within the newspaper. Whether these differences are due to some type of bias or not can still not be determined.

Perhaps further research using a multiple-image method can arrive at such a determination.

Table 1.

News and Editorial Coverage of El Salvador and Nicaragua According to Dateline as Measured in Number of Articles and Number of Paragraphs

a. News Reports

Dateline	Country of Main Focus	
	El Salvador	Nicaragua
El Salvador	36	—
	(671)*	—
Nicaragua	—	17
	—	(288)
Washington, D.C.	20	11
	(301)	(100)
United Nations, N.Y.	0	6
		(62)
California	4	4
	(37)	(63)
Other Central American	3	10
	(35)	(163)
Subtotals	63	48
	(1044)	(676)

b. Editorial Coverage

Editorial	48	51
	(343)	(410)

c. Total Newspaper Coverage

	111	99
	(1387)	(1086)

* Number of paragraphs in parentheses.

Table 2.

News Coverage of El Salvador and Nicaragua According to Source as Measured in Number of Articles and Number of Paragraphs

a. Number of Reports

Subject and Dateline	Staff	Non-Staff	Totals
El Salvador			
Central America	20 (51.3)*	19 (48.7)	39 (100)
United States	15 (62.5)	9 (37.5)	24 (100)
Nicaragua			
Central America	16 (59.3)	11 (40.7)	27 (100)
United States	13 (61.9)	8 (38.1)	21 (100)
Totals	64 (57.7)	47 (42.3)	111 (100)

b. Number of Paragraphs

El Salvador			
Central America	543 (76.9)	163 (23.1)	706 (100)
United States	249 (73.7)	89 (26.3)	338 (100)
Nicaragua			
Central America	360 (79.8)	91 (20.2)	451 (100)
United States	177 (78.7)	48 (21.3)	225 (100)
Totals	1329 (77.3)	391 (22.7)	1720 (100)

* Row percentages in parentheses.

Table 3.

Factor A of the Coefficient of Imbalance and Its Component Values for the Overall Images of El Salvador and Nicaragua

country	El Salvador	Nicaragua
favorable sentences	300	141
unfavorable sentences	395	434
neutral sentences	62	53
relevant sentences	757	628
Factor A coefficients	-.1255	-.4666
Difference between coefficients	.3411	

Table 4.

Factor A of the Coefficient of Imbalance and Its Component Values for the Images of El Salvador and Nicaragua as Portrayed in the Three Types of Coverage — Central American Reports, Domestic Reports and Editorials

a. Central American Reports

country	El Salvador	Nicaragua
favorable sentences	138	55
unfavorable sentences	177	145
neutral sentences	28	18
relevant sentences	343	218
Factor A coefficients	-.1137	-.4128
Difference between coefficients	.2991	

b. Domestic Reports

country	El Salvador	Nicaragua
favorable sentences	66	30
unfavorable sentences	63	89
neutral sentences	5	11
relevant sentences	134	130
Factor A coefficients	-.0224	-.4538
Difference between coefficients	.4314	

c. Editorials

country	El Salvador	Nicaragua
favorable sentences	102	56
unfavorable sentences	155	200
neutral sentences	23	24
relevant sentences	280	280
Factor A coefficients	-.1893	-.5143
Difference between coefficients	.3250	

Table 5.

Full Coefficient of Imbalance Figures on El Salvador and Nicaragua for Each of the Three Types of Coverage and the Overall Image.

type	El Salvador	Nicaragua	difference
Foreign	-.0099	-.0295	.0196
Domestic	-.0017	-.0493	.0476
Editorial	-.0140	-.0409	.0269
Overall	-.0100	-.0877	.0777

Notes

[1] For an excellent overview of the topic see Chapter 6, "The Construction of Images," in Alex Edelstein, Comparative Communication Research, Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1982.

[2] Kenneth B. Boulding, The Image, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1956.

[3] William A. Scott, "Psychological and Social Correlates of International Images," in Herbert C. Kelman (ed.) International Behavior: A Social-Psychological Analysis. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965.

[4] Leo P. Crespi, chief of the Survey Research Division of the USIA, expressed belief that the "application of the image concept in the domain of international relations" was most heartening, and added that the image of the U.S. in other countries is extremely important to those shaping the nation's foreign policy. See "Some Observations on the Concept of Image," Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 25 (Spring) 1961, p. 116.

[5] For an intriguing discussion of bias and objectivity in journalism see; David Paul Nord, "The Ideology of the Press," The Cresset, December 1985, p. 12-19. Also see Michael Schudson, Discovering The News, New York: Basic Books, 1973, especially the introduction and Chapter 5; and Herbert Gans, Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time, New York: Vintage Books, 1980.

[6] Johan Galtung, and Mari Holmboe Ruge, "The Structure of Foreign News," Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 2(1), 1965, pp. 64-91.

[7] See Ralph Lee Woodward, Central America, A Nation Divided, New York: Oxford University Press, 1985; Hubert Howe Bancroft, History of Central America, 3 Vols., San Francisco: The History Company, 1883-1887; and Mario Rodriguez, Central America, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964, especially Chapter 3; Thomas M. Leonard, Central America & United States Policies, 1820s — 1980s, Claremont, Calif.: Regina Books, 1985, especially Chapters 2 and 4; and Rodriguez, op. cit., especially Chapter 4; Richard N. Adams, Cultural Survey of Panama, Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Washington, D.C.: Pan American Sanitary Bureau, 1957; and William T. Sanders, and Barbara J. Price. Mesoamerica: The Evolution of a Civilization, New York: Random House, 1968.

[8] See The World Bank. World Tables, 3rd Edition, Vol. I, Economic Data from the Files of the World Bank, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1983, p. 488; and Carol L. Thompson, Mary M. Anderson and Joan B. Antell, eds. The Current History Encyclopedia of Developing Nations, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1984, pp. 297-299, 318-321.

[9] World Bank, op. cit., pp. 520-523

[10] Leonard, op. cit.

[11] Henry Kissinger, chairman. The Report of the President's National Bipartisan Commission on Central America, New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1984.

[12] See Ole R. Holsti, "Introduction to Part II," in The Analysis of Communication Content, George Gerbner, et al., eds., John Wiley & Sons: New York, 1969.

[13] The term "elite" is used as it is employed in John C. Merrill and Harold A. Fisher, The World's Great Dailies: Profiles of Fifty Newspapers, Hastings House: New York, 1980, pp. 6-15 passim. They define "elite" newspapers as those "aimed at the educated citizen who is aware of, and concerned about, the central issues of his time, and undoubtedly ... read by more opinion leaders than are other types of newspapers," p. 7. They reserve the term "prestige" for elite papers published under government restrictions.

[14] International Press Institute, The Flow of the News, Zurich: IPI, 1953.

[15] James A. Hart, "Foreign News in the United States and English Daily Newspapers: A Comparison," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 43 (Spring) 1966, pp. 443-449.

[16] George Gerbner and George Maravanyi, "The Many Worlds of the World's Press," Journal of Communication, Vol. 27 (Winter) 1977, pp. 52-66.

[17] op.cit., Galtung and Ruge.

[18] Oystein Sande, "The Perception of Foreign News," Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 8 (Summer) 1971, pp. 221-237.

[19] Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi, "The 'World of News' Study," Journal of Communication, Vol. 33 (Winter) 1984, pp. 121-133.

[20] Mervin Lynch and Atiya Effendi, "Editorial Treatment of India in The New York Times," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 41 (Summer) 1964, pp. 430-451.

[21] Haluk Sahin, "Turkish Politics in New York Times: A Comparative Content Analysis," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 50 (Winter) 1973, pp. 685-689.

[22] See also Martin Kriesberg, "Soviet News in The New York Times," Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 10 (Winter) 1946, pp. 540-564, and Patricia A. Williams, "The New York Times and The Washington Post's Editorials on Rhodesia," unpublished masters thesis, School of Journalism, Indiana University, 1981.

[23] For interesting discussions of the relationship between U.S. correspondents and the U.S. government see Susan Heilmann Miller, "Reporters and Congressmen: Living in Symbiosis," Journalism Monographs, No. 53, January 1978, and Robert Blanchard, "The Correspondents Describe Their Work," in Blanchard, ed., Congress and the News Media, Hastings House: New York, 1974. For similarly informative discussions of foreign

correspondents and the governments they report on see W. Phillips Davison, "News Media and International Negotiation," Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 38 (Summer) 1974, pp. 174-91, and "Diplomatic Reporting: Rules of the Game," Journal of Communication, Vol. 25 (Autumn) 1975, pp. 138-46.

[24] G. Cleveland Wilhoit and Dan Drew, "Profile of the North American Editorial Writer, 1971 — 1979," The Masthead, (Winter) 1979-80, pp. 8-13; and "A Profile of the Editorial Writer," The Masthead, (Fall) 1971, pp. 2-14. See also, Edwin Emery and James N. Haidos, "Our Status: A Report Based Upon a Questionnaire Circulated to Members of the National Conference of Editorial Writers," The Masthead, (Spring) 1963, pp. 2-9; Ernest C. Hynds, "Editorials, Opinion Pages Still Have Vital Roles at Most Newspapers," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 61 (Autumn) 1984, pp. 634-39; and Ernest C. Hynds and Charles H. Martin, "Editorial Writers Tell How They Go About Their Work," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 54 (Winter) 1977, pp. 776-79.

[25] John C. Merrill, "The Image of the United States in Ten Mexican Dailies," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 39 (Spring) 1962, pp. 203-209.

[26] Richard H. Willis, "Ethnic and National Images: Peoples vs. Nations," Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 32 (Summer) 1968, pp. 186-201.

[27] See also Richard H. Willis, "Finnish Images of the Northern Lands and Peoples," Acta Sociologica, Vol. 7, 1963, pp. 73-88.

[28] Janice Monti Belkaoui, "Images of Arabs and Israelis in the Prestige Press, 1966-74," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 55 (Winter) 1978, pp. 732-738, 799.

[29] Sang-Chul Lee, "The American Image of Relations with Japan Projected in Three U.S. Dailies," Gazette, Vol. 25 (no. 1) 1979, pp. 31-45.

[30] C.B. Pratt, "The Reportage and Images of Africa in Six U.S. News and Opinion Magazines: A Comparative Study," Gazette, Vol. 26 (no. 1) 1980, pp. 31-45.

[31] Nabil Dajani and John Donohue. "Foreign News in the Arab Press: A Content Analysis of Six Arab Dailies," Gazette, Vol. 19 (no. 3) 1973, pp. 155-170.

[32] The days in 1983 were Jan. 7; Feb. 8; March 2, 15, 20, 29; April 11; May 13, 20; July 7; Aug. 13, 15, 18, 20; Oct. 12, 23; Nov. 6, 10, 16 and Dec. 3, 19. The dates were selected using random numbers from a statistical text.

[33] Roy E. Carter, Jr. and Roger L. Jones, "Some Procedures for Estimating News Hole in Content Analysis," Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 23 (Autumn) 1959, pp. 399-403.

[34] The indices of the six newspapers all contain subject-headings for both Nicaragua and El Salvador which list news reports, editorials and opinion articles.

[35] The four newspapers are all mentioned in John C. Merrill and Harold A. Fisher. The World's Great Dailies: Profiles of Fifty Newspapers, New York: Hastings House, 1980, as being considered "elite" newspapers. Though the authors make no pretense of a scientific selection, they convincingly argue that The New York Times, The Washington Post, and the Los Angeles Times are among the world's 50 great newspapers, and that the Chicago Tribune is an elite newspaper, though not included in their 50 because of its "conservative leanings." All four of the newspapers are considered by the authors to be influential within the U.S. context. Additional support for the "elite" quality of the four papers is given in Carol H. Weiss, "What America's Leaders Read," Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 38 (Spring), 1974, pp. 1-22.

[36] Raymond Fadner and Irving Janis, "The Coefficient of Imbalance," in Language of Politics, Harold Lasswell, Nathan Leites and associates, (eds.), Cambridge: MIT Press, 1965, pp. 153-69.

[37] Ibid., p.155.

[38] A pilot study of a sample of the full data set indicated that readers tended to interpret statements about the rebels as referring to the government in the opposite direction. In other words, if something favorable was said about the rebels, the coders viewed that as an unfavorable statement about the government. The logical notion seems similar to the idea that aiding the enemy of a friend is a slight against that friend.

[39] The definitions used here were derived in large part from G. Cleveland Wilhoit and Taik Sup Auh, "Newspaper Endorsement and Coverage of Public Opinion Polls in 1970," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 51 (Winter) 1974, pp. 654-658, with modifications to the favorable category definitions made to conform to the governmental nature of the subjects.

[40] Fadner and Janis, op. cit., p. 161.

[41] Ibid., p. 161.

[42] See William A. Scott, "Reliability of Content Analysis: The case of Nominal Scale Coding," Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 19 (Fall) 1955, pp. 321-325.

[43] Seven of the coded articles had no byline or source identification and, although these were most probably compiled from wire service reports, it is still possible that they were produced by staff members. The seven reports totaled only 11 paragraphs and so, rather than overstate the contribution of the staff, they were recoded as wire material.

[44] The total number of sentences used in the second factor of the full Coefficient of Imbalance for each of the three types of coverage and the overall was: Foreign, 2029; Domestic, 820; Editorial, 2100; Overall, 4949.